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## Gender in Fragmentary Oratory



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## Of Fragments and Feelings

### Roman Funeral Oratory Revisited

*Hans Beck*

Time travel to ancient Rome would be an unwelcome olfactory experience. Surveying the smellscape of urban centres in the Roman Empire, and of the city of Rome in particular, David Potter declared that there can be no question that the urban air of the Roman Empire stank.<sup>1</sup> This verdict rests on the examination of all sorts of odorous businesses that were situated in the dense urban environment: slaughterhouses as well as meat and fish markets; tanneries that prepared animal skins; laundries that used urine for bleaching purposes; and of course the issue of human waste from pots and sewers which was identified by Martial (6.93) as the most emblematic of all bad smells. Yet the notion of a stinking Rome cuts deeper than the reference to these odours suggests. As was recently pointed out by Neville Morley, smell always works through ‘a combination of the physiological and the psychological or cultural’.<sup>2</sup> On the one hand, it is a sensory experience that is triggered by the presence of certain scents, and the ability of individuals to detect these with their sensory organ. On the other hand, the human recognition of smell largely depends on interpretative choices that steer individuals to a certain reading and classification of scent. This process is by and large the product of cultural traditions. While some odours provoke a universally negative response, also because of the diseases that are associated with them, others are culturally encoded. It is no surprise that the Romans never complained about the smell of their savoury fish paste, *garum*. They liked it—so much so that many had it on their bread for a midday snack.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Potter 1999: 169.

<sup>2</sup> Morley 2015: 113.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Bradley 2015a with the conceptual introduction of Bradley 2015b, who offers an up-to-date guide to the cultural study of smell. For *garum* snacks, see Koloski-Ostrow 2015: 104.

## EMOTIONS: PHYSIOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL ENCODINGS

These preliminary observations are but one example of how the phalanx of perceptive senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch) has entered the world of historical scholarship. The ‘emotional’ or ‘affective turn’ has generated new interest in the cultural dimension of sensory perception. This interest lies beyond the neurobiological chain reactions that senses trigger across the nervous system, and the emotional domino effect that results from it. While the physiological aspects of processing sensory information adhere to the long trajectory of human evolution—although the extent of this is open to debate—the interpretation of this information does not. Rather, it is exposed to the dynamic of cultural change. As a result, the definition of emotions and the constitution of entire economies of emotions differ widely among societies. The basic linguistic problem, that is to say, the challenge of translating terms that denote feelings and emotions into different languages, has been noted by many.<sup>4</sup> Beyond the semantic gap that emerges from the communication of emotions in different languages, emotions entail processes of adaptation, change, and appraisal; they are subject to interventions from social agents and influences beyond human control; the responses to them are once again socially and culturally conditioned. In sum, the emotional economy of the past is never as obvious as scholarship sometimes implies. The social encoding and cultural idiosyncrasy of the sensory world make it clear that the emotional vectors of past societies followed their own, distinct trajectory.<sup>5</sup>

This is particularly true for the performance of public speech before assembled crowds and the emotional reaction it triggers among the audience. In a magisterial contribution on ‘Unveiling Emotions’, Angelos Chaniotis (2012a) reminded us that emotions are not only ‘in people’ but ‘between people’. Emotions have an interpersonal dimension inasmuch as they are shared, and in turn expressed, by a group of people who experience them as a collective, often in a demarcated space and on a formalized occasion. The significance of emotions in the arena of, for instance, public communication and its exposure

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<sup>4</sup> MacMullen 2003: 66–80; cf. Kaster 2006.

<sup>5</sup> For instance, the emotional appeal of Athenian forensic speech appears over the top and at times ludicrous only when measured against present-day conceptualizations of compassion. The Athenians had their own take on this: Konstan 2006: 4–5, 27–8, 259–61; cf. Wohl 2010: 2–9. On the emotional turn, see also Harris 2010.

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to crowd psychology is obvious. Just exactly how crowd psychology wields this impact, and what kind of emotion(s) it triggers, is a different matter. Building on Elias Canetti's pioneering work on *Crowds and Power* (first edition 1960, in German), social psychologists have demonstrated that mass behaviour is influenced by the loss of responsibility of the individual and its submergence to a group that empowers its members (something that increases with the size of the crowd). At the same time, it reduces the realm for individual action through factors such as anonymity and group arousal which weaken personal controls ('deindividuation'). The underpinnings come again from physiological assumptions. Neuroscience has disclosed that group psychologies are part of the physiological development of our species; that they dominate behaviour already in children; and that adults differ from children in their response to collective emotions by regulating them through values and norms as they prevail in society.<sup>6</sup> Incidentally, this aperçu of neuroscience reinforces the idea that emotions are culturally charged. Once again, they appear as a combination of the physiological and the cultural.<sup>7</sup>

EMOTIONAL MAGNIFICATION: THE CASE  
OF THE ROMAN ARISTOCRATIC FUNERAL

Roman funeral oratory was subject to a highly formalized setting. Delivered in the Forum, the speeches were usually held by an aristocratic speaker from the speaker's platform, the Rostra, before an assembled crowd. The set-up was preconditioned by multiple markers of social hierarchy and inclusion, staged before the backdrop of an existential human crisis. Polybius, in the *locus classicus* on the Roman funeral, describes the basic mechanics of crowd psychology and its exposure to both universal and cultural encodings. In his depiction in book 6, Polybius famously asserts that:

Whenever an illustrious man dies, he is carried at his funeral into the Forum to the Rostra, sometimes conspicuous in an upright posture and more rarely reclined. Here, with all the people standing around, a grown-up son . . . mounts the Rostra and talks (λέγει) about the virtues and successful achievement of the dead. As a consequence the multitude (τοὺς πολλοὺς) and not only those who had part in these achievements, but also those who had none, when the facts are recalled to their minds (ἀναμνησκομένους) and brought before their eyes (ὑπὸ

<sup>6</sup> MacMullen 2003: 73.

<sup>7</sup> The terrain of crowd psychology is a treacherous one in social psychology research, starting with Le Bon 1895. The issue is now further complicated by deindividuation processes in social media communication: Lee 2007. See Chaniotis 2012b for a useful discussion of the many proxies of crowd psychology, and their exploration in historical research; cf. also Cavarzere 2011.

τῆν ὄψιν), are moved to such sympathy that the loss seems to be not confined to the mourners, but a public one affecting the whole people (*κοινὸν τοῦ δήμου*).

Polyb. 53.1–3

Polybius captures here the exciting moment when individual grief, or the grief of a family, extended to the assembled crowd of people and translated into a mass experience; Polybius most likely will have been present at an aristocratic funeral during his stay in Rome and hence will have offered this description from personal experience. The word that is used to articulate this emotional magnification is that of two groups of individuals—the aristocratic family and the crowd—becoming *συμπαθεῖς*, literally ‘they feel together’: the common people grow sympathetic with the elite as embodied by the speaker.<sup>8</sup> This shared emotion is so strong that it stimulates the formation of a new group identity. The emotional tide strikes them as a *κοινὸν τοῦ δήμου*, that is, as a community of people. As the mourners become deindividualized and submerged into a larger collective, this new abstract body of ‘the whole people’ is carried away by a distinguishable collective emotion, that of sympathy. In consequence, the joint grief of the aristocratic family and common people magnifies the emotional experience. And, by extension, the sympathy between both groups refills them with the general sense of reciprocity, mutual obligations and loyalty, and unity.

It is striking to see how this feeling of reciprocity and mutual dependency was explicitly articulated at the aristocratic funeral. In the oration delivered for one of his departed sons, L. Aemilius Paullus (cos. II 168) declared:

cum in maximo<sup>o</sup>prouentu<sup>o</sup>felicitatis nostrae, Quirites, timerem ne quid mali Fortuna moliretur, Iouem Optimum Maximum Iunonemque Reginam et Mineruam precatus sum ut si quid aduersi populo Romano immineret, totum in meam domum conuerteretur. quapropter bene habet: adnuendo enim uotis meis id egerunt ut uos potius meo casu doleatis quam ego uestro ingemescerem.<sup>9</sup> Val. Max. 5.10.2

In other words, Aemilius Paullus, anticipating that a disaster which struck his family would be met with greatest sympathy by the people, had prayed to the gods that, if misfortune were to strike, it should indeed fall onto his family rather than he as an individual feeling *sympatheis* with the Roman people over calamities that had hit the Republic as a whole. The fates of his aristocratic family and that of the people were intertwined; in the case of devastation, each group felt for the other, making them one in their mourning of defeat and death.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Collatz et al. 2002: 248 for further references.

<sup>9</sup> ‘... “Fearing lest in the great harvest of our felicity, citizens, Fortune might have something bad in store for us, I prayed to Jupiter Optimus Maximus, Juno, and Minerva that if any adversity threatened the Roman people it might all be directed against my house. Therefore all is well. By granting my prayers they saw to it that you rather grieve for my misfortune than that I groan over yours.”’ According to Valerius Maximus, Aemilius Paullus lost two sons within only a few days before and after his triumph over Perseus in 168 BC.

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The immediate context in which this sense of feeling *sympatheis* was articulated was the section of the aristocratic funeral that was clustered around the funeral oration, held before the people in the Forum. As is well known, the ritual as such also entailed other phases: a procession from the house of the deceased to the Forum, the funeral oration, and the subsequent burial in the family tomb outside the city. Each of these was flagged with the unique experience of sound and smell. Along the way through the city, the *pompa* was accompanied by musicians—the famous *tubicines* or *tibicines*, the former playing large brass instruments, the latter sets of shorter flutes. Their songs announced the momentary state of extraordinariness, a sound signal that suspended the rhythm of quotidian life. As was noted recently, the *tibicen* in particular ‘remplit alors de sa musique sacrificielle tout l’espace ritual’. Song played an important role in the performance of procession rituals and their reception among the audience, shrouding the ritual community in a common soundscape.<sup>10</sup> This extraordinary experience extended to smell also. The home of the deceased, the *domus funesta* (Ov. *Met.* 7.575), was garlanded with cut-off branches of cypress trees, which were widely considered to be a symbol of mourning. The durable, fragrant wood was known to fill the air with a particular scent, making the state of mourning instantly, and insistently, recognizable to anyone who visited the *domus*. The scent of cypresses also dominated the scene of the subsequent burial of the deceased before the family tomb outside the city. According to a later source, cypress logs were used to fumigate the air at cremations, to cover the smell of the burning flesh (Isid. *Etym.* 17.7.34). Given this particular prominence of the cypress at the beginning and the end of the death ritual, it is not unlikely that the branches and cones were also burnt in censers along the route of the funeral procession from the *domus funesta* to the Forum. Such use of aromatic resins is amply attested for other types of processions (see below). If this was the case, the funeral ritual was subject to a lingering scent throughout that swathed the air, magnifying the emotional experience for all participants.<sup>11</sup>

The speech in the Forum clearly marked a decisive moment in the ritual (cf. Flower 1996: 129), encapsulating a distinct moment of human crisis: the eulogy before the people marked the moment when the deceased transitioned from the community of the living to that of his dead forefathers; we will return to this shortly. Maybe here, too, the performance of music by the *tibinices* magnified the experience of crisis; we can only conjecture this much. Either

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Vincent 2016: 119–54, who discusses the role of music and musicians in Roman ritual practice.

<sup>11</sup> Serv. ad *Aen.* 3.680; cf. also 6.216: *ante cupressos constituunt cupressus adhibetur ad funera, uel quod caesa non repullulat, uel quod per eam funestata ostenditur domus, sicut laetam frondes indicant festae. Varro tamen dicit pyras ideo cupresso circumdari propter grauem ustrinae odorem, ne eo offendatur populi circumstantis corona, quae tamdiu stabat respondens fletibus praeficae, id est principi planctu.* Cf. also Gladhill in this volume.

way, Polybius says that the funerary oration delivered by a family member provided the audience with a frame of reference but Polybius' choice of words amounts, as it were, to an understatement in this case: he simply says that the speaker talks about the virtues of the departed. The immediate connotation is that the people were moved first and foremost by the speech as such: by its content, style, and delivery.

Content analysis is indeed the orthodox approach to (funeral) orations before the Roman people. This vein of inquiry has put the interaction between speakers and their audience under scrutiny. Among other assessments, this exchange has been labelled 'the rhetoric of reciprocity of merit and reward'.<sup>12</sup> This means a mode of communication in which the aristocratic orators pointed out not only their own achievements before the people but also the long lineage of their illustrious forefathers. The goal of such extensive rhetorical displays of family esteem was to corroborate the claim to aristocratic leadership. Enriched with reference to the *exempla maiorum*—the exemplary ancestors of earlier periods who had laid the foundations of Rome's grandeur through their displays of *uirtus*, *honos*, and *gloria*—the rhetoric of merit highlighted the aristocracy's record of success as leaders of the community.<sup>13</sup> What made the exercise so persuasive, if not compelling, was its repetitive nature: the audience was virtually bombarded with, and implicitly reminded to adhere to, a select series of Roman values and achievements that funeral orations reiterated so profusely.<sup>14</sup> In turn, the boastful claim for the social authority of the elite was geared towards the promotion of the speaker's family in particular—its prestige and fame as accumulated by all of its members in the past and present. The two governing functions of public speech—in the Forum, in the *comitia* held in the Campus, or in the informal *contio*—were therefore to instil mutual bonds of loyalty between the ruling elite and the common people, and to recommend the speaker and his family to the citizens.<sup>15</sup>

The contents approach to public speech supports the attempt to conceptualize the power relations between the people and the ruling elite. But there are also caveats. Recent research on the soundscapes of public speech in the premodern era—that is, before the invention of the loudspeaker—has alerted scholars to the fact that the auditory interaction between speaker and listeners was subject to various limitations. For instance, oratorical technique, architectural acoustics, and ambient noise levels greatly impacted the number of people who could clearly hear a public speech. Fascination with the (Greek)

<sup>12</sup> Hölkeskamp 2011a: 21.

<sup>13</sup> Bücher 2006.

<sup>14</sup> Covino 2011: 75.

<sup>15</sup> The topic of Roman funerary oratory is not under-researched. Among the high volume of contributions, I find the following particularly helpful, also with regards to further reading: Kierdorf 1980; Flaig 1995; Hölkeskamp 1995; Flower 1996: 128–58; Covino 2011; Habinek 2005a and 2005b: 17–19, 36–7; Pina Polo: 2009.



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amphitheatre and its sonic capacity to reach an audience of 15,000 or more evokes the picture of at-large audibility. But note that this was achieved through applied spatial acoustics that were tied to the theatre as such: the large front wall of the skene to reflect sounds in one direction, the angle of rise in the seating area, the mouth openings of theatre masks functioning as miniature megaphones. In addition to this, singers were able to project their voices farther than the plain speaker.<sup>16</sup>

None of these attempts to utilize spatial acoustics applied to the funeral oration in the Forum, or to speeches in the Comitium, for that matter.<sup>17</sup> According to most reconstructions, the Comitium was a circular area in the north-west corner of the Forum. The structure was stepped with a *cauea*, and had a diameter of *c.*30 metres across. Accordingly, it accommodated a maximum of 3,600 to 4,800 people, but each of these calculations is based on maximum figures. Depending on the occasion, attendance was most likely lower.<sup>18</sup> The actual Forum space, which extended horizontally to the south-east of the Comitium, cut across this diameter. The diagonal axis from the Rostra to the Tribunal and the temple of Castor measured *c.*80 metres. Ramsay MacMullen has calculated a maximum capacity of up to 15,000 people.<sup>19</sup> But the place was interspersed with statues, honorary monuments, which not only took up space but which were also harmful to the acoustics. The orator spoke to the audience from the speaker's podium, the Rostra, which put the speaker in an elevated position. In such a setting there were various degrees of audibility, where the impact of the spoken word evidently decreased with the distance from the speaker; for audiences in the middle of the Forum, some 40 metres from the Rostra, hearing must have become a significant challenge. In standing spaces beyond, inaudibility will have prevailed for the greatest part.<sup>20</sup>

All this leads us to conclude that the collective sympathy at a public funeral was not fuelled by the *laudatio funebris* alone. The speech provided narrative cohesion, but it was not the only trigger. Indeed, in Polybius' account the impact of the speech is supported by the element of sight. For one, Polybius

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Blesser and Slater 2007: 94–7.

<sup>17</sup> Note how walled venues such as the great Echo Hall at Olympia once again created a different soundscape.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Mouritsen 2001: 18–19, whose reconstruction is based on Coarelli 1983–5: 1.119–226; 2.11–59, 87–166. Note that the round structure has been called into question, among others, by Carafa 1998.

<sup>19</sup> MacMullen 1980: 456.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Aldrete 1999: 73–84. In popular adaptations of public speech in the Forum the visual set-up is usually one of a large crowd spellbound by the words of a mighty speaker. But in reality, the soundscape was not dissimilar to the one captured so vividly in the movie *Forrest Gump*. When Forrest addresses the assembled crowd of hippies before the Lincoln Memorial and the microphone fails, even the immediate bystanders have trouble understanding him; he speaks down a flight of stairs. In Monty Python's *Life of Brian*, the Sermon on the Mount is also delivered downwards. Audibility issues among the more remote attendants thus invite various creative misunderstandings.

declares that the reaction of the common people was intensified when the achievements of the deceased were ‘brought before their eyes’. This might be understood figuratively, as a reference to the narrative that is brought before the inner eye of the listener. As Polybius moves on to describe the procession of the so-called *imagines* and the actors who impersonated the forefathers of the deceased, however, he switches the focus from speech to sight:

There could not easily be a more ennobling spectacle for a young man who aspires to fame and virtue. For who would not be inspired by the sight of the *imagines* of men renowned for their excellence, all together and as if alive and breathing? What spectacle could be more glorious than this? Polyb. 53.9–10

In Polybius’ account, the delivery of the funeral speech relies largely on visual signs and devices that amplify its impact. While the speech as such, its lines and sentences, was ephemeral, the awe-inspiring *imagines* were visible for as long as the funeral lasted, which enhanced their symbolic and emotional force.<sup>21</sup> The *imagines* had been carried to the Forum in the preceding funeral procession, in which they were worn by men who were also dressed in the *ornamenta* of the deceased’s ancestors of rank and carried other status symbols. The deceased was usually shown on a bier on a *feretrum* or on a *capulus*. When the procession arrived in the Forum, the dead man was propped in an upright posture at the Rostra; it was suggested by some that there might have been an effigy used to enhance the visual representation.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, it seems that the dead man was also represented among these esteemed ancestors, which symbolized his induction into the ranks of his illustrious forefathers. What Polybius does not mention, but what will nonetheless have added to the emotional script, was that the orator displayed his own feelings through gesture, facial expressions, and modulation of his voice, and that these expressions were no doubt made in close conversation with the visual evidence of *imagines* and actors. The sympathy of the common people was therefore the result of a multisensory experience of sound and sight, embedded in the highly charged context of a confrontation with their own mortality.<sup>23</sup>

In a passage that is often overlooked, Cicero complains that ‘the ears of the Roman people were somewhat obtuse (*ures hebetiores*), while their eyes keen and alert’ (Cic. *Planc.* 66). He makes this observation to explain why he had

<sup>21</sup> Visibility of the *imagines* might have also been blurred by distance and monuments on the Forum. The main difference here was the lasting display of effigies, vis-à-vis the ephemeral character of the spoken word.

<sup>22</sup> See Flower 1996: 130 n. 7.

<sup>23</sup> On gestures and facial expressions, Aldrete 1999 is key. For the Roman funeral in general and the complicated issue of *imagines* during the *pompa*, in addition to the references in n. 5 above, see Flaig 1993 and 2003; Blome 2001; Blösel 2003; Beck 2005b: 84–90; Walter 2003: 260–8; Pina Polo 2004; Dufallo 2007: 117–19; Blasi 2012. See also Favro and Johanson 2010 for digitally crafted reconstructions of the positioning of audiences during the funeral procession.

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chosen to live a life ‘in the public eye’ (*in oculis*)—to be seen in the Forum at all times, and to grant anyone an audience at any time. Besides the personal hyperbole, the point is well taken. In Rome’s ‘open air culture’, the notion of direct exchange applied to all levels of public communication. But the registers of communication were nonetheless distinct. Visibility and audibility, or the senses of hearing and sight, wielded discernible influences over an audience: while speech was fraught with acoustical limitations, the force of sight resulted from its potential to trigger all sorts of references, interpretations, and associations that made visual information so convincing.<sup>24</sup> In fact, public speech utilized this potential of sight through reliance on visual signs and symbolic dimensions such as gestures, displays, and ostentations, all of which determined its efficiency beyond the actual force of the spoken word.<sup>25</sup>

In such a holistic approach towards Roman oratory, the recognition of emotional economies is not only inevitable; it becomes a key moment in the assessment of public speech. As the most eminent medium of mass communication in ancient Greece and Rome, public speech was an act of performance that stimulated a variety of perceptive senses among its participants. In light of acoustic limitations and reduced sound quality, such a multisensory charge was inevitable. With this, Roman Republican oratory, and Roman funeral oratory in particular, comprised a complex ensemble of speech, sight, and other senses, which constituted a thick emotional script between the speaker and the audience.<sup>26</sup>

Aristocratic speakers were masters in navigating the sea of audience emotions. They knew all too well how to hit the strides of a ‘rhetoric of inclusion’.<sup>27</sup> More than what was actually said, they knew how to say it: how to generate compassion; how to catch the audience through humour or joviality; how to flatter, excite, or horrify the people; how to exhort their listeners and put them in their place if a show of authority was required.<sup>28</sup> Much of this was generated through modulations of the voice, facial expressions, and gestures; C. Gracchus was remembered as taking these devices to an entirely new level, through walking around the speaker’s platform and shaking off his toga when it suited the dramaturgy of the moment.<sup>29</sup> The *Rhetorica ad Herennium* provides the oldest

<sup>24</sup> For an extensive survey of the various ‘turns’ in scholarship that are aligned with this, including the spatial and the performative, cf. Hölkeskamp 2006a and 2015, with a vast bibliography.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. also Hall 2014b, although mostly on forensic speech. Note how the notion of visibility of speech also translated into the depiction of speech scenes in Republican representative commemorative art—monuments, frescos, depictions of spectacles, and statues: Hölkeskamp 2011a: 28–9.

<sup>26</sup> I will return to the issue of smell below. <sup>27</sup> Hölkeskamp 2013.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Laser 1997: 138–55. According to later tradition, the first speaker to fully embrace these qualities was M. Cornelius Cethegus (cos. 204): *ORF*<sup>4</sup> 7 T1 (= Cic. *Brut.* 57–60). But see Wisse 2013 on the ‘bad orator’.

<sup>29</sup> Plut. *Tib. Gracch.* 2; cf. also *C. Gracch.* 5. Cf. David 1983b: 107–8.

extant discussion of gestures (under *corporis motus*, movement of the body), which is based on the same taxonomical scheme that the Auctor applied to his study of the voice.<sup>30</sup> In the rhetorical manuals of Cicero and Quintilian, this extends to the discussion of oratorical delivery as such (*actio, pronuntiatio*), perfection of which was soon considered to be among the essential skills of the accomplished orator. Discussions such as these surrounding oratorical skills and techniques document an alert sense among Roman speakers of the need to follow the emotional script, but as we noted earlier, they do not automatically disclose the cultural encoding of that script. Is it possible, after all, to unravel the cultural distinctions of feelings and emotions of a period as remote as the Roman Republic? Will we ever be able to grasp the chills experienced by a Republican crowd?<sup>31</sup>

#### THE SITUATIONAL SET-UP: THREE CASE STUDIES

The sources make it a challenge to approach Roman oratory from such a holistic perspective. If there is one genre in the canon of sources that seems particularly underqualified to do so, then it is the body of fragments of Roman oratory. Fragments are reduced to a narrative core, often stripped down to the bare bones of a few words; they are without context; and in the few cases where the context is related, the fragment regularly fuses with its citing authority, often so much so that its initial shape can hardly be restored.

Among the earliest fragments and testimonies of Roman oratory figures the prominent speech by Q. Caecilius Metellus (*RE* 81) who had delivered the *laudatio funebris* for his father Lucius (*RE* 72) in 221 BC; this is the earliest extant piece of Latin oratory.<sup>32</sup> A summary conclusion survives in Pliny who is otherwise well-informed about the illustrious family career of the Caecilii Metelli. The speech has received much attention for its praise of superlative achievements as well as for its implicit system of aristocratic values. It is usually viewed as an exemplary piece of panegyric and a landmark funeral oration in the development of the genre. According to Pliny, Quintus Metellus set out to praise the *cursum honorum* of his father, who was consul twice (251, 247), dictator, master of the knights, and land commissioner; during his triumph in 250 BC he led very many elephants. These pieces most likely reflect the shape of the earlier sections of the oration. Quintus Metellus then

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Hall 2007. See also Hilder in this volume.

<sup>31</sup> The same is true for the voice of the crowd as such, to which most scholarship is 'deaf', as Millar 1984: 3 famously put it. One of the notable exceptions is Morstein-Marx 2004: 119–59 ('The Voice of the People').

<sup>32</sup> Plin. *HN* 7.139–41 (= *ORF*<sup>4</sup> 6 F2).

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moves on to boast about his father's 'ten greatest and best objectives in the pursuit of which wise men spend their lives'. What follows is a cascade of superlatives. For Lucius 'had aspired to be a first-class warrior, the best orator, the bravest commander, to handle the most important matters under his auspices, to hold the greatest honour, to be supremely wise, to be regarded an outstanding senator, to obtain great wealth in an honourable way, to leave behind many children and to be the most distinguished in the state'.<sup>33</sup>

Pliny muses whether (Lucius?) Metellus ought to be a happy or an unhappy man, in light of the fortunes and misfortunes that befell him in his old age, but this is not the point here.<sup>34</sup> More interestingly, it would be interesting to know how such rhetorical hyperbole—or overkill?—was received by the audience. The prevailing verdict in scholarship is that it would have made a deep impression. Struck with a veritable firework display of superlatives, the audience could not help but marvel at the über-achievements of the deceased aristocratic leader. It is genuinely impossible to verify this view or to assess the impact of the speech through context analysis. A more comprehensive approach urges us to caution. The ten superlatives, as related by Pliny in a somewhat bullet-point manner, will most likely have served as 'the framework for further elaboration which is no longer extant'.<sup>35</sup> So Quintus Metellus will have talked about these points in one way or the other, most likely with different emphasis and at different length. But even if the list of ten virtues was elaborated on rather than simply enumerated, it is doubtful whether the audience would have been able to memorize them after the event. To be sure, the list must have been impressive. But it was also very dense, and the details will have escaped many. For instance, the *cursus honorum* evidently instilled the audience with a sense of the greatness of the deceased: he was twice consul and dictator, and praise for his service as land commissioner was most likely remarkable. Yet this latter reference might also have served as a rhetorical smokescreen that diverted from the fact that there was no aedileship in Lucius' career. Furthermore, and more importantly, it appears that Lucius was never elected censor. The oration praises him as *summus senator*—incidentally, a *hapax legomenon* in the surviving corpus of Latin literature which seems to be so odd that it could have been authentic.<sup>36</sup> As member of a plebeian *gens*,

<sup>33</sup> Plin. *HN* 7.139: Q. *Metellus in ea oratione, quam habuit supremis laudibus patris sui L. Metelli pontificis, bis consulis, dictatoris, magistri equitum, XV uiri agris dandis, qui p<lu>rim<o>s elephantos ex primo Punico bello duxit in triumpho, scriptum reliquit decem maximas res optimasque, in quibus quaerendis sapientes aetatem exigerent, consummasse eum: uoluisse enim primarium bellatorem esse, optimum oratorem, fortissimum imperatorem, auspicio suo maximas res geri, maximo honore uti, summa sapientia esse, summum senatorem haberi, pecuniam magnam bono modo inuenire, multos liberos relinquere et clarissimum in ciuitate esse; haec contigisse ei nec ulli alii post Romam conditam.*

<sup>34</sup> He lost his eyesight in a fire when he seized the statue of Pallas Athena from the temple of Vesta: Plin. *HN* 7.140.

<sup>35</sup> Covino 2011: 72.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Flower 1996: 140.

Lucius did not qualify for the honour of *princeps senatus* at the time, so the label of *summus senator* might have been an elegant compensation to make up for circumstances that were beyond Lucius' control. With no censorship under his belt, Lucius' main obstacle was not descent from a plebeian family but rather this failure to be elected censor (a further prerequisite for the honour of *princeps senatus* at the time) despite several occasions for a successful campaign.<sup>37</sup> Could such a man univocally be declared the *summus senator*?

The orator Quintus, probably in his late teens at the time of his father's death, seems to have staked everything on individual achievement and success in all areas of merit. The only reference to Lucius' family appears to have been that he had 'many children'.<sup>38</sup> But then again, there is no extant reference to ancestors. Maybe this is for a reason. The Caecilii Metelli had entered the plebeian nobility only in the generation of Lucius' father, Lucius Caecilius Denter (*RE* 92), himself a social climber who was consul in 284 and praetor in 283.<sup>39</sup> The *pompa funebris* will have shown only one *imago* then, if any, although there might have been other family members of praetorian rank who are not attested. Again, in light of the many esteemed men of the day, was it really credible to declare Lucius Metellus to be the most successful of all? No doubt, there will have been many veterans from Metellus' campaigns in Sicily (251 cos., 250 procos., 249 mag. equ., 247 cos.). From their personal interactions with him they would have been able to contextualize Quintus' references, and many will have agreed with the speaker, based on how they remembered Lucius. Meanwhile, the greater part of the audience was in no position to check Quintus' claims against their personal experience. Maybe authenticity didn't matter after all. If this is the case, then the effectiveness of the speech indeed depended not so much on the veracity of its contents but on its hyperbolic superlatives. Quintus distracted his audience from the lack of copious *imagines* and a *cursus honorum* that was by no means stellar and he steamrolled the crowd with abstract values and virtues—civic, religious, and military—all of which his father had embodied in means that were, according to Quintus, unmatched. The sheer quantity added to the quality of his claims.

<sup>37</sup> Lucius Caecilius was consul 251 and again in 247. So for 247 he seems to have preferred a second consulate over the possibility of a censorship that was held that year. For the censorship of 241, the plebeian spot went to C. Aurelius Cotta, cos I 252 and II 248, i.e. in the years before Caecilius' consulates. The future censorships in his lifetime were held in 241, 236, 234, 231, 230, and 225 (cf. the *fasti censorii* as compiled by Beck 2005a: 81–3, from the *fasti Capitolini* and after *MRR*). If the tradition about his blindness is correct (Livy, *Per.* 19, and see above n. 33), this might have impacted his ability to run for the censorship. But he appears again as dictator *comitiorum habendorum causa* in 224 (*fasti Capitolini*, name entire), which challenges this view. In his *RE* entry, Münzer concludes that the story of Caecilius' blindness 'gehört daher wohl der Legende an' (Münzer 1897b: 1204).

<sup>38</sup> He had three sons and presumably several daughters. Cf. Flower 1996: 137 and 141.

<sup>39</sup> On Denter and the Caecilii Metelli, see Hölkeskamp forthcoming and 2011<sup>2</sup>: 180; Brennan 1994: 432–7; Beck 2005a: 65–6, 117–18.

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There was no *pompa funebris* with effective props, no breathtaking display of the family's symbolic capital. Nor did the speech hold up against a reality check of what Lucius had actually achieved in his lifetime. If the audience was caught by a sense of sympathy with Quintus Caecilius and his family, and there is no reason to assume that it was not, than this emotion was most probably fuelled by the picture of excellence Quintus had projected for them, with all its hyperbolic exaggeration.

In the final years of the Hannibalic War, between 207 and 203 BC, Q. Fabius Maximus 'Cunctator' delivered the funeral speech in the Forum for his deceased son Q. Fabius (cos. 213). One fragment survives—if indeed it is to be assigned to this Q. Fabius Maximus—because, as so often, of a grammatical peculiarity: *amitti quam apisci* ('to be lost rather than to be acquired', Prisc. *Inst.* 1.380.9–10).<sup>40</sup> The testimonies in Cicero and Plutarch, both of whom say that the speech was extant to them, praise Fabius' philosophical depth as well as his collectedness as attested in the speech.<sup>41</sup> Cicero speaks of the admirable countenance with which he bore the death of his son (*Sen.* 12). Plutarch seconds this assessment, claiming that the speech lacked all rhetorical flutter. Rather, it was intellectually deep and linguistically demanding (Plut. *Fab.* 1.6; cf. 24.6). As is to be expected, it is impossible to recreate the emotional charge of Fabius' *laudatio funebris*; most likely, the philosophical discourse will have weighed heavier in the scripted version of the speech, which offered more room for nuance and intellectual subtlety. But with this, the notion of collect-edness and careful, well-versed reflection does not disappear altogether from the oral presentation of the speech. It might not be insensitive to assume that Fabius' delivery before the people was indeed full of countenance, with overtones of intellectual integrity and moral authority as embodied by the speaker.

Note the striking contrast to Caecilius Metellus' speech. Quintus Caecilius had delivered the speech as a young man who spoke in recognition of a father who had died at an advanced age, whereas in Fabius' case the father, himself at a very advanced age, buried the son. This certainly gave the speech a different tone and generated a distinct emotional bond between the speaker and his audience. The *sympatheia* they jointly experienced put Fabius in a unique position, and this position in turn will have configured the entire event. For while in other funeral orations it had become common practice to display the illustrious ancestors of the departed—and hence to highlight the collective glory of his aristocratic family—in the present display of *imagines* there was no representation of the father: he was still alive. But Fabius was also the most esteemed family member of the Fabii Maximi since the days of five-time

<sup>40</sup> ORF<sup>4</sup> 3 F5.

<sup>41</sup> Cic. *Cato* 12; Plut. *Fam. Max.* 1.7, 24.6 (= ORF<sup>4</sup> 3 F2–4).

consul Fabius Maximus Rullianus. Following in the footsteps of Rullianus' oldest son, who held two consulships, the father of the orator held only one consulship and there was no doubt that the present speaker, the great Cunctator, far outshone his ancestors as well as his departed son.<sup>42</sup> The window of time in which the speech could have been delivered (after 207, the son's attested appointment as *legatus*, and before 203, Fabius' death) falls in the final years of the Second Punic War, when Hannibal's position in southern Italy was becoming increasingly critical, if not hopeless. Even more so, this was the period in which Fabius' military strategy from the earlier years of this conflict must have appeared key in the firm defeat of the Carthaginians. While Fabius was fiercely criticized for his strategy of delay before Cannae, it became the governing military maxim in the aftermath of 216 BC. In the final years of the Hannibalic War, it could have been viewed as wise providence that had saved the state (cf. Enn. *Ann.* 12.363–5). When Fabius, now in his early 70s, climbed the Rostra to speak about his devastating loss, this must have been an occasion to reflect on long-term strategies, steadfastness, and endurance, both of collective hardships and of personal calamities. The published speech will have dwelled on these topics in even greater detail and with more thoughtfulness. Was Fabius' funeral oration then one of the key documents that shaped the image of the great exemplum of Fabius Maximus in later periods?<sup>43</sup>

At around the same time as Fabius delivered the speech for his son, M. Claudius Marcellus composed a funeral oration for his father, famous war hero and maverick of the Hannibalic War (208 BC). The speech was published but no single fragment survives.<sup>44</sup> Coelius Antipater noted that, in it, Marcellus the son gave a distinct account of the death of his father, who was killed in combat (*FRH* 11 F36 = *FRHist* 15 F27). In 208, Marcellus (the father), in his fifth consulate, was ambushed by Hannibal's troops near the town of Venusia. The following encounter was hardly more than a skirmish with no more than a hundred horsemen in Marcellus' cortège, but the fighting was severe enough to see the consul killed. Marcellus the son was himself part of the Roman unit yet he somehow managed to escape and return to Rome.<sup>45</sup> Addressing the Roman audience, he spoke with the authority of an eyewitness of the events that had led to the death of his father. Coelius reports that the young Marcellus presented a version that differed significantly from other oral traditions and from what Coelius himself was able to research—all

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Beck 2005a: 269–301 (on the difficult family tree, see 273 with n. 19). The cognomen 'Cunctator' comes only from a later period.

<sup>43</sup> The exemplum of Fabius Maximus is discussed by Beck 2000 and Roller 2011 (with bibliography). The impact of the speech on the later exemplification shines also through in Cic. *Sen.* 12, who comments that the script was in general circulation.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. *ORF*<sup>4</sup> 5 F1.

<sup>45</sup> On Marcellus' life, cf. Flower 2003; Beck 2005a: 302–27 (with bibliography).



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versions agreed that Marcellus fell victim to Carthaginian *insidiae* ('ambush' and 'insidiousness').<sup>46</sup>

It is not impossible that Marcellus the son actually delivered an oration in the Forum on the occasion of his father's death, but it is unclear if this speech was part of a fully-fledged funeral ceremony. The display of *imagines* would have been peculiar. Marcellus' ancestors were only modestly celebrated. The family was part of the plebeian nobility but Marcellus' father had not held high office; his grandfather was consul in 287.<sup>47</sup> The deceased was the true champion of the family: bearer of the *corona ciuica* and renowned single combatant, five-time consul, conqueror of Syracuse; there was a very extensive array of distinctions which Marcellus will have evoked in his speech.<sup>48</sup> But nothing of this will have diverted the attention of the audience from the fact that the body of Marcellus was missing. When the consul was killed, Hannibal got hold of it. According to Livy, he buried Marcellus on the hill where he was killed and returned the ashes in an urn to the son. According to other sources, the urn had gone astray altogether.<sup>49</sup> Either way, there would have been little to be seen during the speech in the Forum. Maybe the family had arranged for an effigy of Marcellus to be put up on the Rostra. Is it surprising, then, that the orator made it his principal task to counter the charge of negligence, let alone gross recklessness, and to offer a distinct version of why his father carried out his manoeuvre, despite the immense risks this entailed? Livy claims that the plan, effectively, was so imprudent that it killed not only Marcellus but also his colleague T. Quinctius Crispinus; and with them, it destroyed almost the entire *res publica* (*prope totam rem publicam in praeceptis dederat*, 27.27.11.). Livy's judgement evidently hyperbolizes the narrative. But the death of both consuls in battle was indeed a rare occasion (Crispinus died from his injuries shortly after this event), and the allegation of carelessness evidently made the rounds. Faced with this charge, Marcellus will have admonished the crowd and weighed in on the fact that, no matter what anybody else said, he, Marcellus, was present there and participated in the fighting. The sense of sympathy thus combined with a fair dose of charge and justification to endorse the course of events as portrayed by the son.

<sup>46</sup> *FRH* 11 F36 = *FRHist* 15 F27. Ambush: Livy 27.27.14. The divergent historiographical traditions have been studied by Caltabiano 1975; Carawan 1984; Flower 2003. Augustus appears to have drawn from the published speech in his funeral oration for his son-in-law Marcellus, see Plut. *Marc.* 30.6 and *Comp. Pel. Marc.* 1.5 with Kierdorf 1980: 137–8.

<sup>47</sup> Beck 2005a: 305 (stemma).

<sup>48</sup> I have fictitiously reconstructed the speech elsewhere, piecing it together and following the model of superlatives as laid out in Caecilius Metellus' speech from 221 BC, see Beck 2005a: 325–6.

<sup>49</sup> Livy 27.28.1; Plut. *Marc.* 30. Flower 1996: 146 finds it thus unlikely that a funeral was held in Rome at all; cf. also Bernstein 2000: 160.

FROM EVENT TO HISTORY: MEASURING  
THE SUCCESS OF ORATORY

Anthony Corbeill has reminded us that public speaking was an exercise in which young aristocrats could fashion a distinct profile for themselves.<sup>50</sup> The funeral oration in particular is often regarded as one of the earliest opportunities to make an appearance before the Roman people in a formalized setting, and hence as the first instance of formal exposure to a crowd that would later on bestow its honours on them and support their candidacies for public office. In their assessment of this test of a young man's ability, scholars usually rely on the published texts of speeches as they survive in summary references and fragments (never in full), and we measure those extant remains against the later career of the speaker. Since, in virtually all of the attested cases, those careers were steep, the funeral speeches must have been successful, too. Quintus Caecilius Metellus, Marcus Claudius Marcellus, son of the warhorse Marcellus, the young Gaius Julius Caesar—all of these men had great careers after they had delivered funeral orations in their youth, so their speeches must have been great by all accounts. And, to come around full circle, their future careers highlight the importance of the exercise of public speaking.

It would be hazardous to deny the importance of Roman funeral oratory, or of the performative act of public speaking in general. This said, it is worth recalling that the measuring of oratorical success followed a different logic in Roman antiquity than it does in modern scholarship. Caesar's case might arguably be considered to be exceptional rather than paradigmatic, simply because of the later course of events. But there are also intricacies that urge us to exercise caution with the assessment of the speech. Caesar's funeral oration of 69 BC for his aunt Julia, the widow of Marius, is referenced time and again for its claim of the *gens Iulia's* divine ancestry from Venus and the Roman kings.<sup>51</sup> For Christian Meier, the funeral oration for Julia, along with the one for his deceased wife Cornelia of around the same time, indicate that 'Caesar now began to attract attention in a different way... He became known as an extravagant, bold and disrespectful young man, certainly not without arrogance, though of a rather charming kind.'<sup>52</sup> According to Meier, the speeches thus mark a turning point in the young Caesar's career, a moment where he first displayed 'the skill and artistry of his rhetoric'.<sup>53</sup> This might indeed have been the case, but what really aroused the audience reaction to both funeral orations went beyond what Caesar had actually said. Extolling his family's descent from Venus may or may not have been extraordinary; other noble

<sup>50</sup> Corbeill 2004: 107–39.

<sup>51</sup> Sources: Suet. *Caes.* 6.1; Plut. *Caes.* 5.2; *ORF*<sup>4</sup> 121 F28–9. See Blom 2016: 146–80 on this as well as the other Caesarian discussed subsequently.

<sup>52</sup> Meier 1980<sup>2</sup>: 134–5.

<sup>53</sup> Meier 1980<sup>2</sup>: 136.

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families had toyed with similar claims. But what really got the audience going was that the *imago* of Marius was displayed in the cortège. The visual representation of Marius triggered a wave of excitement. This was the first occasion on which the public had seen Marius since his funeral seventeen years earlier, in 86 BC.<sup>54</sup> While some responded to this with displeasure, others were less offended, hurling abuse at Sulla's supporters criticizing Caesar. In doing so, Caesar broadcasted emotions and affections that drew the assembled crowd back to the days of the conflict between Marius and Sulla.<sup>55</sup> In such a climate, the claim for divine ancestry might not have been of the most eminent concern.

Things were different with the speech for his departed wife Cornelia, Cinna's daughter. The event was remarkable as such because it was contrary to Roman custom, which allowed funeral orations in the Forum only for matrons rather than for young, childless wives. Nothing is known about the contents of the speech but the audience was said to have been deeply touched by the passionate grief displayed by the speaker. The impact of Caesar's words thus depended on the very moment of human crisis as we saw it assigned to funeral speeches above, along with the decision to breach prevailing traditions and to honour his wife in public. It is unknown if Caesar resorted to praise for his father-in-law or had his effigy put up in plain sight. The very context of the speech might have been counter-intuitive to such polarization.<sup>56</sup> In a different context, the issues of success and successful delivery were determined by other factors. In around 77 and 76 BC, Caesar delivered two prosecution speeches in two separate trials against Cn. Cornelius Dolabella (cos. 81) and C. Antonius Hybrida (cos. 63), both *de repetundis*. In both cases the prosecution failed. Whether this was due to the prevailing political circumstances or Caesar's flat delivery (or both) is unknown.<sup>57</sup>

It is a truism to acknowledge that our information today is mostly retrieved from texts that underwent careful revision for publication after delivery, although the extent of this revision is debated.<sup>58</sup> Be that as it may, most Romans never reread the text of a funeral oration—and certainly no average voter did. Instead, public speech was judged against the backdrop of the charged atmosphere of the moment. Roman audiences measured the success of oral delivery according to the challenges and opportunities of a live performance, the thrills and chills it triggered, the sensations and surprises it held for them. All of this became formative of how they remembered the event in the aftermath, cognitively and emotionally, and how the speech translated from event to history. The efficiency of speech thus depended on the spoken

<sup>54</sup> As a *hostis* of the Republic, his imagery had been removed from the public sphere. Cf. also Flower 2006: 105 on the excitement of the *déjà vu*.

<sup>55</sup> Plut. *Caes.* 5.2; see Tan 2013: 119 on this interpretation of the audience reaction.

<sup>56</sup> Suet. *Caes.* 6.1; Plut. *Caes.* 5.4–5; *ORF*<sup>4</sup> 121 F30–1.

<sup>57</sup> *ORF*<sup>4</sup> 121 F15–25. Cf. now Blom 2016 for a full discussion of these speeches.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Flower 1996: 129.

word, but since, as we have seen, there were so many limitations to this, speakers were asked to enhance the persuasive effect through all sorts of rhetorical strategies. Beyond the issue of discursive contents, these strategies really determined the success of a speech. Weaving the emotional fabric of the event, they fuelled the sense of sympathy or, to be more precise, they fuelled a culturally encoded notion of feeling of *συμπαθείς*. In the particular variant of Roman culture, this sense was closely intertwined with ideas of loyalty, belonging, and leadership. It was through these emotional economies that speech made the greatest impact, if the speaker hit the keys well, realigning his personal loss with that of the *res publica* and the various modes of communal cohesion and belonging this entailed. If the orator didn't hit these keys, his speech fell flat.

The *pompa funebris* was an intermittent ritual, as was the *pompa triumphalis*. More cyclical and frequent were the *pompa circenses*, which drove the whole city into a state of excitement. Fabius Pictor offers the earliest depiction of the spectacle; the referenced timeline is more or less the same as the one of the funeral orations we discussed earlier. In his lengthy description, Fabius explains that the urban space was filled with the sound of music from choirs and bands of flute-players. Their songs accentuated the extraordinariness of the moment, amplifying the experience and sensation. Then, at a critical moment in the procession, right before the images of the gods were paraded, came 'those carrying censers, upon which aromatic herbs and frankincense were burnt along the whole route'.<sup>59</sup> What kind of aromatic resin did the Romans apply? Was this frankincense also flared during funeral processions, or were the latter distinct for their use of cypress pyres, because of their forceful connection with mourning and death? Either way, Fabius makes it obvious that the city of Rome was tinted in scents that highlighted the special character of the event, glossing it over with a unique olfactory experience. Soon enough, Roman memories of circus processions will have triggered associations with the particular scent that altered the smellscape of the city during those days. Most likely, we will never be able to uncover the scent. But it reminds us that the impact of the ritual went beyond the traces it left in the literary tradition, be it in historiography or in published speeches. Recent interest in the cultural dimension of sensory perception inspires us to read the fragments of Roman oratory in a more comprehensive way. If at all possible, we are invited to venture through the emotional depths of oratory and to feel for the fragments, in a literal sense.

<sup>59</sup> *FRH* 1 F20 = *FRHist* 1 F15; cf. Beck 2005b: 90–6.